

this scheme is supposed to be closed by the end of the Eighth Plan. Now, I have written to the Planning Commission that since the Scheme has not been finalised and completed, there is a necessity for continuation of this scheme during the Ninth Plan. While continuing this scheme, I have also been requesting them to consider all these factors.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question number 543.

SHRI MADHUKAR SARPOTDAR: This particular question is pertaining to my city. There was no opportunity given to me to ask the question. It is most surprising.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You can write to the Minister and get a reply from him.

Question number 543.

(Interruptions)

SHRI MADHUKAR SARPOTDAR: As regards Howrah, a question was asked. That is all right. I have been raising my hand from the very beginning and this particular question is pertaining to our city. You have not allowed me. It is all right. But I would like to bring it on.....*(Interruptions)*.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You please write for Half-an-Hour discussion.

DR. U. VENKATESWARLU: The hon. Member can come to me so that we can discuss it. If there is any problem, we can sort it out....*(Interruptions)*.

SHRI VIJAY GOEL: What is the definition of 'Mega City'?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri Vijay Goel, this cannot go on like this.

Collaboration of India with Foreign Countries

*543. DR. M. JAGANNATH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Nepalese delegation to the Conference of the SAARC Council of Ministers held in December 1996, had presented a paper advocating collaboration between India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan for developing contiguous parts of the four countries in the areas of water, electricity, transport, trade, communications etc.;

(b) if so, the broad details thereof; and

(c) India's reaction to this concept and whether any initiative is proposed to be taken by India in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP): (a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

The paper presented by the Government of Nepal

broadly included promotion of sub-regional economic co-operation by engaging Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and India through a series of comprehensive expert studies to help implement the concept of sub-regional cooperation in the core economic sectors. The proposal envisaged utilising economics of scale for mutual benefit through a three phase plan.

India welcomed this initiative of economic cooperation involving the four countries of South Asia and has participated in the Foreign Secretary-level meeting held at Kathmandu on April 2, 1997. It was agreed at the meeting that the objective of the "growth quadrangle" is to create an enabling environment for rapid economic development through identification and implementation of specific projects of cooperation in the core economic sectors of multi-modal transportation and communications, energy, trade and investment facilitation and promotion, tourism, natural resources and environment.

The Foreign Minister of the four countries met in New Delhi on April 8, 1997 and formally launched the sub-regional economic cooperation initiative. They reaffirmed their commitment to pursue sub-regional economic cooperation for accelerating economic growth, overcoming infrastructural constraints and making optimal use of sub-regional complementarities.

DR. M. JAGANNATH: The Minister has given in the reply that India welcomed this initiative of economic cooperation involving the four countries of South Asia and has participated in the Foreign Secretary-level meeting held at Kathmandu on April 2, 1997. It was agreed at the meeting that the objective of the growth quadrangle is to create an enabling environment for rapid economic development through identification and implementation of specific projects of cooperation in the core economic sectors of multi-modal transportation and communications, energy, trade and investment facilitation and promotion, tourism, natural resources and environment.

To this proposal, the Pakistan has not liked our improving relations with these countries and the Pakistan officials expressing unhappiness over the move have stated that a sub-regional group like this will undermine the SAARC. In reality, Pakistan is afraid that India's coming forward with these nations would be a setback for her.

My question to the hon. Minister is whether the objection of Pakistan would come in the way of implementation, or would slow down the process of cooperation, with Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. What steps have been taken in furtherance of the proposal since December, 1996 when it was mooted? What is the assistance or concession India proposes to give taking into account the special needs of the smaller States?

SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP: Madam, as regards the first question relating to objections by Pakistan, I may tell the hon. Member that it appears that he is not abreast of the happenings at Maldives. The objections initially raised by Pakistan no more hold good. At the discussions which

are going on in the SAARC Summit at Maldives, we have been successful in overcoming the objections. This group of four nations has decided now to go forward with whatever was planned earlier.

As regards the steps taken subsequent to the meetings, I may inform the hon. Member that meetings have taken place between the Foreign Ministers of these four countries first at Kathmandu and then at Delhi. The discussions will be further taken up. The entire working is divided into three steps. The first step will be conceiving the various ideas for the development of these four States. The second step would be designs, planning and all that. The third step will be the implementation of the scheme.

As India, among these four countries, happens to be the best endowed, naturally, we shall have to give more concessions to other States. But ultimately, this is a process of cooperation between these four regional nations within the SAARC. Whatever steps will be taken, in the various aspects of the sub-regional group, will be beneficial for all the States involved, that is, India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan.

Not only India will benefit out of this; Nepal will benefit, Bhutan will benefit and Bangladesh also will benefit.

DR. M. JAGANNATH: Madam, what steps have been taken to allay the concerns and doubts in the minds of the businessmen from the neighbouring countries to offer unstinted cooperation without short term calculation of cost and benefits ?

SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP: Madam, the very fact that trade and investment facilitation and promotion is a part of this sub-regional group objectives, I may assure the Member that whatever doubts the businessmen may have would not remain once the implementation starts. In fact, on various matters like tourism, natural resources and environment, multi-modal transportation and communication, energy etc., cooperation will take place.

DR. M. JAGANNATH: Madam, the hon. Minister has not spelt out the details. My specific question was: what type of assistance and concessions are being offered ?

SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP: Madam, these are still in the process of discussion and it will take some time.

SHRI SUDHIR GIRI: Madam, we want that the aims of SAARC should be successfully achieved and they should be fruitful to all of us. For this purpose, reciprocal understanding should be built up and misunderstanding should be removed. There is a report in a section of the Press that Sri Lanka and Pakistan have already objected to the formation of the sub-regional groups inclusive of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and India. So, may I know from the hon. Minister as to what steps will the Government take to remove the doubts in the minds of Pakistan and Sri Lanka ?

SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP: Madam, the objections by Sri Lanka and Pakistan are part of history now. Further

discussions have taken place and the Summit that is now on in Maldives has successfully overcome these objections raised by Pakistan and Sri Lanka at one time. Now, everybody has accepted that it is necessary that the sub-regional groups should come forward and they work within the framework of SAARC. Article 7 of SAARC Charter permits this type of sub-regional groupings. It is not only in the interest of these groups to come together and work together, but it is also expected that the working would be in the overall interest of SAARC.

SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO: Madam, I am repeating the same doubt. According to the ground rules of SAARC, matters concerning all the seven countries are taken up by SAARC. If it is bilateral, trilateral, quadrilateral etc. within the seven countries of SAARC, normally it is taken up under the aegis of the SAARC programmes. If there has been any change in the ground rules now, at which Summit was the change made ?

Personally I feel that this is going to present some difficulties down the road. So, would the hon. Minister kindly enlighten the House as to how, according to the ground rules, this has been done, either by amending the ground rules or making an exception ? On what basis was this decision taken ?

If four countries or three countries, by themselves, come together outside SAARC, that is all right. We had difficulties in matters concerning India and Pakistan. There was a time when we refused even to discuss these things at the time of the SAARC Summit or at the time of the SAARC Foreign Ministers' Meetings. We have been rather quite strict on this particular thing. Would the hon. Minister elucidate the point a little further ?

SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP: Madam, when this concept was evolved, no doubt, certain apprehensions were expressed by Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

It was felt that any sub-groupism within the SAARC countries may lead to some objections within the whole regime and perhaps it may lead to some sort of fragmentation. Those may be their ideas and concept. The article 7 of the SAARC Charter reads as under:

"The standing committee may set up action committees comprising member States concerned with implementation of projects involving more than two but not all member States."

So, India took benefit of this article of the Charter. We also took benefit of article 10 which spells out the principle of unanimity. So, this was taken under article 7 of the SAARC charter. The objections which were raised during various discussions at various levels and at various places melted. The talk which was initiated under the SAARC regime, was sought to be taken out of the SAARC regime and independently a process was sought to be implemented. Later on— and particularly now at the Summit that is going on it was decided that this subject of regional group which is called the growth quadrangle

of the four regional member countries of the SAARC would work within the framework of the SAARC. So, as I said, these objections no more exist today. I would also request the hon. Members of this House that we may await the arrival of our Prime Minister as he is likely to make a statement tomorrow explaining the discussion that has taken place in a better way.

SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO: Madam, that would be correct because it is not at all clear how a particular project could be taken as an exception or as emanating from the SAARC ground rules. We will have to be very clear about it because down the road, as I said, we might encounter difficulties. So, I would like the Prime Minister, after he returns, either to take the House into confidence or write to some of us—the Leaders of the Opposition. Since I am asking, he may also send a copy to me kindly. I would like to enlighten myself. I am not at all clear how this has been done.

SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP: Madam, the suggestion is well taken. We will implement the suggestion.

Rate of Growth in Employment

*544. SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) Whether employment in the organised sector has been declining in the country;

(b) the extent to which the Government enterprises, both Union and State, contributed to this decline;

(c) Whether any steps are being contemplated to increase the rate of growth in employment in both organised and unorganised sectors; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM): (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

Estimates of employment in the organised sector (all public sector establishments and all non-agricultural establishments in the private sector employing 10 or more workers) as per the information obtained under the Employment Market Information Programme of the Directorate General of Employment & Training as on 31st March 1992 to 1996 were as follows:-

Employment (Lakh)				
As on 31st March	Sector			Growth Rate
	Public	Private	Total	
1992	192.10	78.46	270.56	1.2%
1993	193.26	78.51	271.77	0.5%
1994	194.45	79.30	273.75	0.7%
1995	194.66	80.59	275.25	0.54%
1996	194.29	85.12	279.41	1.51%

From the above it may be seen that growth of employment in the organised sector was not significant and the share of public sector (considering both Central and State) in the total organised sector employment was of the order of 70%.

Our of 194.29 lakhs employment in the public sector as on 31st March 1996 about 35.38 lakhs and 29.20 lakhs were in the Quasi Government Central and Quasi Government State respectively.

Recognising the high incidence of under-employment and increasing casualisation of labour, the approach to the Ninth Five Year Plan has stressed the need for enhancing employment opportunities for the poor. Greater productive employment will be generated in the growth process itself by concentrating on sectors, sub-sectors and technologies which are labour intensive, in regions characterised by higher rates of unemployment, and under-employment. Seven basic services have been identified for priority attention with an all out efforts for their complete coverage in a time bound manner. These are safe drinking water, availability of primary health service facilities, universalisation of primary education, provision of public housing assistance to all shelterless poor families, nutritional support to children, connectivity of all villages and habitations by roads and public distribution system targetted to the poor. Thrust given to the above seven basic services will also generate employment.

The existing programmes to upgrade the skills of artisans in rural areas and improving their capabilities with modern tool kits will be strengthened in the Ninth Plan. In every district, it is envisaged that the district Rural Infrastructural Development Fund (RIDF) will be used for projects which encourage groups of small farmers, artisans, or landless labourers to organise for skill upgradation, processing, transport infrastructure or quality improvement, centred around large agro based projects or identified centres of regional, national and export demand.

In addition to above, Special Employment Programmes are in operation to provide employment to the weaker sections of the population in both rural and urban areas, which include Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, Employment Assurance Scheme in rural areas and Nehru Rozgar Yojana, Prime Minister's Integrated Urban Poverty Eradication Programme (PMIUPEP) and Urban Basic Services for the Poor (UBBP) in urban areas and Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana specifically for the educated in both rural and urban areas. For the balance unemployment the Ninth Plan will also implement a National Employment Assurance Scheme.

The approach paper to the Ninth Five Year Plan, in its guidelines for selection of programmes, has inter-alia, stipulated that schemes which are non-displacing, empowering and labour intensive should have priority.

[Translation]

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Mr. Chairman, Sir,